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EXPERIMENTAL USE OF THE "IMPRESS METHOD OF READING HABILITATION."

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THE PROBLEM OF THIS STUDY WAS TO DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE READING LEVEL OF A CHILD WHO HAS A SEVERE READING PROBLEM CAN BE RAISED BY USING AN INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM CALLED "READING HABILITATION." THIS IS A SYSTEM OF UNISON READING IN WHICH THE STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR READ ALOUD SIMULTANEOUSLY AT A RAPID RATE. THE METHOD IS AIMED AT (1) BRINGING ABOUT THE EXTINCTION OF "PHONETIC BOUNDNESS," AND (2) A FEEDBACK SYSTEM THAT INVOLVES HEARING, VISION, AND SPEAKING. FROM APPROXIMATELY 150 CANDIDATE STUDENTS IN SEMIRURAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS, 20 STUDENTS WERE SELECTED FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND 20 FOR A CONTROL GROUP. THE STUDENTS WERE MATCHED FOR IQ, AGE, GRADE PLACEMENT, READING LEVEL, AND SEX. READING LEVELS WERE DETERMINED THROUGH SCORES ON FORM ONE OF THE GATES SILENT READING TEST. THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP RECEIVED SPECIAL INSTRUCTION, 10 MINUTES A DAY FOR 30 DAYS, THROUGH THE "READING HABILITATION" SYSTEM. THE CONTROL GROUP RECEIVED THE SAME AMOUNT OF INSTRUCTION, BUT CONVENTIONAL READING TECHNIQUES WERE EMPLOYED. UPON RETEST WITH THE GATES INSTRUMENT, THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP SHOWED A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN READING ABILITY OVER THE CONTROL GROUP. (JC)

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# EXPERIMENTAL USE OF THE "IMPRESS METHOD OF READING HABILITATION"

Cooperative Reading Project No. S-167

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## PROBLEM TO BE RESEARCHED

There are many severly handicapped readers in the public school system. By "a severely handicapped reader" we mean a child whose reading level is at least three years below his chronological grade placement. The task was to see to what degree the reading level of a child who has a severe reading problem can be raised by using a method to be called "Impress Method of Reading Habilitation," hereinafter referred to as "Reading Habilitation." Theoretically, the procedures are designed to overcome a blocking in a child with a severe reading problem.

## OBJECTIVES

The objective is to raise the reading level of the severely handicapped child by a specific method of reading habilitation. The problem as stated in terms of a null hypothesis is: (a) There will be no significant difference between those children who receive special reading instruction by the Impress Method of Reading Habilitation and those who receive no specific reading help other than that offered by a classroom teacher. (b) There will be no specific difference between those children who receive an equal amount of individual help (10 minutes a day) and those receiving the Impress Method of Reading Habilitation.

## RELATED LITERATURE

There are numerous studies in the literature relating to techniques of remedial reading and the effects of special reading instruction. However, there are few studies related to this specific type of reading method. The closest that could be discovered was a psycholinguistic method being used by Kirk and McCarthy (1). Eames (2) has pointed out the neurological implications of reading

disorders, but suggests no method of habilitation. Rabinovitch and Ingram (3) feel a parietal cerebral dysfunction to be the primary etiological factor in severe reading problems, but only suggest conventional remedial techniques and with a limited success; the emphasis being on an elaborate diagnosis rather than on habilitation, though they did discuss the tracing over of various words as a kinesthetic approach, meeting with some success as far as the measurement of spelling, etc. goes. However, Emmet Betts (4) suggests that the standardized tests cannot measure levels and difficulties of reading with handicapped readers. Therefore, remediation cannot be applied to these special students, etiological factors not being the same, though symptomatology may be. This trend in thinking is further emphasized by Smith and Carrigan (5), who discuss reading disabilities as a function of synaptic transmissions on a chemical level. They suggest three dimensions. Their third dimension, dealing with anxiety (and anxiety is one which they hypothesize as it did not specifically appear on diagnostic testing) to be one based upon a chemical interaction of cholinestaerase (CHE) and acetylcholise (ACH). In essence they state that perhaps on a chemical level the anxiety raises the circuit-breaking effect of CHE on ACH. This has implications to the proposed method of habilitation as far as the Impress Method goes, as it may tend to reduce anxiety, again hypothesizing on a chemical level, or a combination of chemical and interaction level with reinforcement and extinction.

Heckleman and others (6) conducted a pilot program using the Impress Method of Reading Habilitation in the Merced County Schools (1961). 22 students took part. The students ranged in grades 5 through 12. They showed a mean reading gain of 2.6 on the Gilmore Oral Reading Test. The total time for instruction

for each student was 5 hours.

In 1963 a pilot project was carried out by a school district in Sonoma County (7) by the author, with 6 students. After 6 weeks of instruction with the Impress Method of Reading Habilitation (a total of 5 hours for each student at 10 minutes a day), they showed a growth of 1.6 years.

The last two mentioned studies represent the available literature, although unpublished at this time.

## DESIGN OF RESEARCH

The design of this experiment was the classic control and experimental groups matched for sex, IQ, chronological age, and grace placement when possible. The control group received 10 minutes of individual instruction a day in conventional reading techniques. The prime control group received no special instruction other than being given the various tests. The experimental group was seen by the experimental teachers for 10 minutes a day for a period of 6 weeks, or a total of 5 hours instruction.

## METHODOLOGY

The reading habilitation method is a system of unison reading whereby the student and instructor read aloud simultaneously at a rapid rate. The disabled reader is placed slightly in front, with the student and instructor holding the book jointly. As the student and instructor read the same material in unison, the voice of the instructor is directed into the ear of the student at close range. In most instances the student has his right hand free and is able to use his finger as a locator. This is encouraged during the first week of unison reading. Also, initially the student traces over large Z's which have been mimeographed prior

to the onset of the program. This is to help left-right implementation by the kinesthetic approach as many of the readers are found to have difficulty in this area and they will read one word at the top of the page and another at the bottom. As the words are being spoken, the student reader slides his finger along the line following the words that are being spoken. The finger must be located at the spoken word. In some instances the instructor will guide the student's hand.

At times the instructor's voice may be louder and faster than the student's. At other times the instructor may read more softly than the reading voice of the student and lag slightly behind, the student thus carrying himself along.

The approach to the reading is spontaneous and as few pauses are made in this process as possible. The goal is to cover as many pages of the reading material as can be done in the time available and without causing physical discomfort on the part of the student. At no time does the instructor attempt to teach sounds or word recognition; thus a complete break with past tradition must be made at this point. No attention is called to accompanying pictures or content of the story. After the reading session, the instructor refrains from asking the student any questions about what he was reading, but permits the student to volunteer information which he wishes to give at that time. The instructor always comments positively as to the success of the child and calls his attention to the new fluidness with which he is now reading and suggests to him that he is now able to read. Any positive motivation or stimulation that can be given to the child is permitted.

The level of reading material that is suggested during the first week is somewhat lower than his ability level. Thereafter, it should be moved up to his chronological grade placement and above.

In essence, the method is aimed at two things: (1) the bringing about of extinction of "phonetic boundness" and its accompanying tension over failure to read, and (2) a feed-back system that involves hearing, vision and speaking implications in terms of the reconditioning of a reading pattern.

This method is not advanced as a cure-all, but only as a method to work with a highly specific group of children.

POPULATION

The criteria for inclusion in the special reading program will be:

(1) An IQ of 85 and above as determined by Stanford-Binet, Form L-M.

(2) Reading level 2 years below chronological age placement based on Gates Silent Reading Test, Forms 1, 2 and 3.

(3) Child in grade 5 through 8.

(4) No known gross neurological or emotional problems.

The children were selected from the schools in Sonoma County on the basis of teacher referral, using the criteria indicated above. Further selection and refinement was then made by a school psychologist using the above mentioned tests. All groups continued to receive reading instruction from the regular classroom teacher during the experiment.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

TABLE I

A comparison of reading scores between experimental, control, and prime control groups

| | Initial reading scores 2/65 | Exper. period reading scores 3/65 | Reading gain (6-week period) 3/65 | Final reading score 6/65 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | yrs-mos. | yrs-mos. | mos. -wks | yrs. -mos. |
| Exper. | 1.8 * | 2.1 | 3.2 | 3.6 |
| Control | 2.0 | 2.0 | 0.2 | 3.3 |
| C' | 1.9 | 1.9 | 0. -2 | 2.0 |

*refers to Gates Silent Reading Test score

N for Experimental equals 20
N for Control equals 20
N for C' equals 9

## DATA ANALYSIS

From the above table it can be seen that at the beginning of the experiment (2/65) all three groups were at relatively the same position as to years and months of reading as measured by the Gates. Following the experimental group cross horizontally, we can see that the mean gain of 3.2 (months) is considerably more than that obtained by the control group gain (.2) and considerably more than the prime control group, which suffered a loss (-.2). The final testing, which took place at the end of school, shows that a consistent gain of .3 (months) has been maintained above those gains shown under the test results (Final reading

score). The Dixon-Mood Sign Test for Paired Observations (8) was used for a statistical analysis. The results indicate a statistical significance at less than the 2 percent level of confidence. Thus, we could expect the chance of these scores occurring is less than 2 in 100. Thus, from a statistical standpoint we can accept with a high level of confidence the fact that these differences are a true difference and reject the null hypothesis that there are no differences between the experimental and control groups. Since there is essentially no risk involved with a type 1 or type 2 error, any further statistical analysis is not warranted.

## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Three groups of children were selected to participate in the reading program that was to be called the "Impress Method of Reading Habilitation." 20 of these children were selected as the experimental group, 20 were considered control, and 9 were considered prime control. The students were matched for IQ, chronological age, grade placement, reading level, and sex. A psychologist screened the children from a larger pool of students who were referred by the teachers. After selection (Form 1) the children were administered Form 2 of the Gates Silent Reading Test. The two experimental teachers split the children evenly; that is to say, each having a junior high school, etc. At the end of 6 weeks, after a total of 5 hours instruction at 10 minutes a day, the children were retested with Form 3. The experimental group showed a gain of 3.2 (months), the control group a gain of .2, and the prime control group a loss of .2. A statistical analysis showed it was beyond expectations that these scores would occur by chance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, i.e., there were no significant differences

on an intra-score basis when we analyze the reading vocabulary and the comprehension levels.

It would seem from an analysis of the data that the Habilitation method per se has an effect on the students who were involved. Since the control students were treated in a similar manner as far as personal attention goes, the writer feels that we can reject the idea that the Hawthorne effect has induced the reading gain, though we can never discount it as a factor in any research.

It would seem from the present research that it would be worthwhile to implement the Impress Method of Reading Habilitation with retarded readers. Since the gain in reading is maintained (3 months), it is felt that while we can improve these children's reading levels, further study is needed of a longer term nature. That is to say, we should continue teaching the children with the impress Method for longer periods of time and measure the various effects and their holding qualities. A further point must be made at this time: that we must look upon the gains made by these children as doubly significant when we consider that in the past the children have regressed as far as reading ability goes. Thus, in all probability this is the first time they have moved forward at a steady pace.

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